REMARKS

Please enter this Preliminary Amendment before calculating the filing fee. This Preliminary Amendment eliminates the multiple claim dependencies in the claims.

The priority history has been inserted on page 1. An English language Abstract has been supplied.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: July 16, 2001

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

Claim 3 has been amended as follows:

3. (Once Amended) Process according to [Patent Claim 1 or] Claim 2, characterized in that the reaction in step a) is carried out at a temperature of from 600°C to 700°C.

Claim 4 has been amended as follows:

4. (Once Amended) Process according to [any of Patent Claims 1 to] Claim 3, characterized in that the reaction with ozone in step b) is carried out in the presence of a mineral acid at a temperature of from -20°C to 0°C.

Claim 5 has been amended as follows:

5. (Once Amended) Process according to [any of Patent Claims 1 to] Claim 4, characterized in that the reductive work-up in step b) is carried out with an alkali metal hydrogen sulphite at a temperature of from -20°C to 20°C.

Claim 6 has been amended as follows:

6. (Once Amended) Process according to [any of Patent Claims 1 to] Claim 5, characterized in that the CN compound used in step c) is an aqueous HCN solution or an aqueous solution of an alkali metal cyanide.

Claim 7 has been amended as follows:

7. (Once Amended) Process according to [any of Patent Claims 1 to] Claim 6, characterized in that the reaction temperature in step c) is from 0°C to 30°C.

Claim 8 has been amended as follows:

8. (Once Amended) Process according to [any of Patent Claims 1 to] Claim 7, characterized in that in step b) an adduct of the 2-methylpyridine-5-carbaldehyde with the alkali metal hydrogen sulphite is formed which is employed directly without isolation in step c).

Claim 9 has been amended as follows:

9. (Once Amended) Process according to[any of Patent Claims 1 to] Claim 8, characterized in that the base used in step d) is either an aqueous alkali metal hydroxide solution together with a phase-transfer catalyst or an alkali metal alkoxide in the presence of an organic solvent.

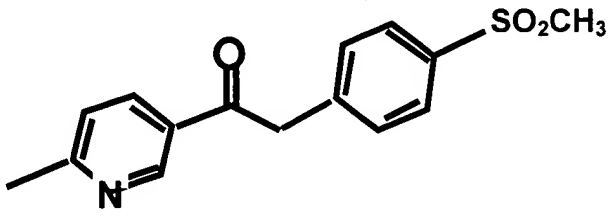
In The Specification:

The following priority history has been inserted on page 1 between the Title and the first line:

This is a 371 National Stage Application of International Patent Application PCT/EP00/00240, filed on January 13, 2000, that has priority benefit of European Patent Application 99100590.1, filed on January 14, 1999, and that has benefit of Provisional Application Serial No. 60/145,996, field on July 29, 1999, that has priority benefit of European patent Application 9910059.1, filed on January 14, 1999.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A starting product for the preparation of COX-2 inhibitors, notably the compound 1-(6-methylpyridine-3-yl)-2-[(4-(methylsulfonyl) phenyl]ethanone of the formula (I):



(I)

A method for making the compound.